

# Helmsley Community Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121364
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313963
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ralph Higgs

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	155
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lesley Patterson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Hiley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Carlton Lane Helmsley York North Yorkshire YO62 5HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01439 770783
<b>Fax number</b>	01439 771963

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school draws pupils from a small market town and its outlying rural settlements. Pupils come from a wide variety of family backgrounds and most are from relatively advantaged homes. Almost all of them are of White British heritage. The number on roll is falling gradually and pupils are organised into a combination of single and mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. The school holds a number of awards in recognition of aspects of its work. These include the Basic Skills Quality Mark, an Artsmark and an Activemark, and the International Schools Award. It also holds a local Inclusion Quality Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory and improving education. It has several good features. Senior staff have acted with urgency this year to overcome weaknesses in school performance which had become apparent in teacher assessments and national test results. Consequently, the decline in standards has been halted and they are now rising. The work seen was broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory taking account of their starting points and capability. The small number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in relation to their targets because their needs are met well. Governors and staff are united in moving the school forward and there is a clear focus on improving learning. The challenge for the school, which it recognises, is to sustain the momentum of recent advances to further raise standards and achievement. This is within the school's reach as it has a good capacity to improve.

A number of key factors have contributed to this improving picture. A more robust system of assessment and a clearer method of tracking pupils' progress have been established. The subject leaders for English, mathematics and science have taken a significant role in implementing new teaching strategies. Established and newly recruited staff have been deployed effectively. The school now has accurate data about how well pupils are doing in relation to their targets. It is using this information soundly to provide additional support and challenge where it is required. However, the school has not fully resolved the effects of uneven progress in some year groups which contributed to declining standards in recent years.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is some good teaching across the school but there are also some inconsistencies which restrict pupils' progress. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage due to stimulating and effective teaching which is based on a good understanding of their learning needs. However, in Key Stages 1 and 2, learning activities are not always tailored effectively to the needs of different ability groups. In some lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and activities are not demanding enough. Teachers are using the new, helpful, attainment-mapping system to set targets but they do not involve pupils enough in assessing their own work to help them have a clear understanding of what to do to improve.

Pupils enjoy the variety of work they do in a relevant and interesting curriculum. They attend school regularly and participate keenly in the wide range of after-school activities on offer. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and stay fit because the curriculum strongly promotes these qualities. Provision for literacy and numeracy has been strengthened and is contributing to improved progress. However, the school does not systematically provide opportunities in subjects other than English and mathematics to help pupils extend their literacy and numeracy skills. Very good relationships and sensitive support from a caring staff strongly promote pupils' personal development, which is good. Pupils know that there is always an adult on hand if they need help. In lessons, and throughout the school, they behave maturely and safely, and are quick to help each other if need be.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The school has taken advantage of a strong partnership with the local authority (LA) to help it make necessary improvements. Self-evaluation procedures are more robust and a wider range of staff and governors are involved in checking performance than was previously the case. This has given the school a secure understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, a new three-year plan provides

clear and appropriate direction for improvement. The school has now begun to set its sights higher and has established more challenging targets for pupils to reach in 2009.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and ensures that children make good progress from skills that are typically as expected on entry to the Nursery. As a result, almost all children reach and some exceed the learning goals expected by the time they enter Year 1. The staff team plan effectively so that children experience a wide range of creative and interesting activities. Children benefit from indoor and outdoor activities which encourage their curiosity and extend their learning. The high expectations of staff and a strong focus on individual needs ensure that children feel safe and secure. Parents typically say that they are kept well informed by staff and that, 'nothing is too much trouble,' in dealing with individual concerns. As a result, children become confident and work and play happily together. Children's development is assessed thoroughly. This enables staff to effectively plan the next steps in learning. However, the school recognises that the way assessment information is recorded does not enable the impact of provision to be easily analysed. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well and there is smooth transition between Nursery and Reception.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, including the match of work to pupils' needs, in order that pupils' progress is accelerated and standards are raised.
- Involve pupils more in assessing and evaluating their work so that they have a better understanding of what to do to improve.
- Provide systematic opportunities across the curriculum to enable pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards have declined in recent years. This trend is more marked in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. To some extent, this was due to changes in the ability profile of different age groups but it was also because of some underachievement. Assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007 showed that the higher ability pupils were not reaching the standard expected by their performance in the Foundation Stage. A picture of faltering achievement was also evident in the Key Stage 2 national tests in 2006 and 2007, particularly in mathematics and science. However, good teamwork and a firm focus on monitoring pupils' progress have halted this decline. Internal school tracking data shows that all groups of pupils are currently making at least satisfactory progress by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 to reach targets which are adequately challenging. However, there is evidence of limited gains in several classes. This is largely because some pupils have had a lot of catching up to do despite the hard work of teachers to remedy the situation. Pupils' current progress is stronger than previously although, with the exception of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, their achievement is no better than satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy learning new skills and taking part in all that the school provides. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils acquire a strong sense of right and wrong and relate well to each other and to adults. They are well behaved, welcoming to visitors and are positive about school. Attendance levels are satisfactory and improving. Punctuality is very good. Pupils take pride in the friendly, caring atmosphere that they help to create. They say that bullying is rare but that it is dealt with effectively if it occurs. Their cultural horizons are successfully extended; they enjoy participating in outdoor adventurous activities and take a keen interest in the wider world. This is partly as a result of links with schools in several other countries. Pupils readily take on responsibility. They make a valuable contribution to the school and to the wider community. For example, older pupils help lead several after-school activities, such as the dance club. The school council has led improvements to playground facilities. Preparation for the workplace and later life is satisfactory. While pupils develop good social and computer skills, their progress in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and the information they provide for pupils is accurate and clear. There is a pleasant atmosphere in classrooms which is conducive to learning. Consequently, pupils are productive and take care with their work. Teaching assistants work confidently alongside class teachers and are particularly supportive of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In recent times, teachers' understanding and use of assessment to target and promote learning has improved. However, there are still occasions when the work has too broad a base, and pupils, particularly the higher attainers, are not challenged enough. Although some lessons move along at a lively pace, there are lessons in which the pace of learning is too slow and pupils could achieve more. When given the encouragement to do so, pupils readily ask questions and put forward their own ideas. However, pupils do not consistently have enough opportunity to develop the skills they need to become independent learners or to assess and evaluate their work for themselves.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Pupils are well served by the curriculum because it meets their needs well. It is carefully planned so that pupils in single or mixed-age classes can build on their earlier learning. Careful attention is paid to all ensuring that all pupils have access to the learning the curriculum provides. There is also a good emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development. Enrichment weeks successfully make imaginative links between subjects to help make learning easier. However, opportunities to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills in subjects such as geography or science depend too much on the creativity of the individual teacher. The curriculum is enhanced with a good range of educational visits and visitors to the school. These broaden pupils' learning effectively. For example, considerable use is made of the school's location in a National Park.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The quality of care, support and pastoral guidance provided for pupils is good. Any pupils experiencing difficulties with their behaviour or attendance are very well supported. Child protection requirements and health and safety procedures are well established and secure. Pupils rightly feel safe and very well cared for. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Links with parents and outside agencies are used well to ensure pupils experiencing difficulties get the support they need. Pupils are well supported when they join school and prior to transfer to secondary school. Recent improvements to assessment are enabling teachers to provide pupils with more accurate information about their progress. However, the school is at an early stage of guiding pupils how to improve through the consistent use of targets.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Staff at all levels have responded well to the need to raise the school's sights for pupils' achievement. At the heart of this is a more rigorous analysis by senior staff of the data on the school's performance, and a closer check of the quality of teaching and learning. Subject leaders are taking a fuller part in these processes and have quickly learned to apply new leadership skills. Initiatives such as that to improve the use of assessment have been led well. Governors have revised their procedures to enable them to hold the school to account and to contribute more effectively to raising standards. Financial management is on an even keel and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

The school has worked well with external agencies, such as the LA to help it improve staff skills and provision for pupils. For example, teachers' understanding of standards in mathematics and English has been extended by working alongside LA consultants. Parents strongly value the provision made by the school and are pleased with changes introduced to involve them more in their children's learning.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Helmsley Community Primary School, York, YO62 5HB

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave to the inspector team when we visited your school. We enjoyed our discussions with you and visiting your classes.

These are the good things we found out about your school, which provides you with a satisfactory and improving education:

- we agree with you that your school is enjoyable, friendly and caring
- the youngest children do well in the Nursery and in Reception
- our visits to lessons showed that you work hard and are keen to learn
- you behave well in lessons and around the school
- you know how to lead healthy lives and how to keep safe
- you are quick to offer your help to each other
- there is a good range of interesting things to do and to learn in and out of lessons
- staff are always on hand to help you if needed
- the headteacher, staff and governors are working successfully to improve your education.

To help you even more we have asked your school to:

- find ways to make teaching and learning always good in lessons and to set you work that will help you do as well as possible
- provide you with better guidance on how to improve the standard of your work
- provide you with more opportunities to develop and practise your English and mathematics skills in your other subjects.

Once again, thank you for being so helpful towards us. I know that you will do your best to help the school continue to improve.